

your impairment(s). Although we consider opinions from treating and examining sources on issues such as whether your impairment(s) meets or equals the requirements of any impairment(s) in the Listing of Impairments in Appendix 1 to subpart P of part 404 of this chapter, your residual functional capacity (see §§ 416.945 and 416.946), or the application of vocational factors, the final responsibility for deciding these issues is reserved to the Secretary. We will not give any special significance to the source of the opinion on these issues.

(f) *Opinions of nonexamining medical and psychological consultants and other nonexamining physicians and psychologists.* We consider all evidence from nonexamining physicians and psychologists to be opinion evidence. When we consider the opinions of nonexamining sources on the nature and severity of your impairments, we apply the rules set forth in paragraphs (a) through (e) of this section. In addition, the following rules apply to State agency medical and psychological consultants, and to medical advisors we consult in connection with administrative law judge hearings and Appeals Council review.

(1) At the initial and reconsideration steps in the administrative review process, except in disability hearings, State agency medical and psychological consultants are members of the teams that make the determinations of disability. A State agency medical or psychological consultant will consider the evidence in your case record and make findings of fact about the medical issues, including, but not limited to, the existence and severity of your impairment(s), the existence and severity of your symptoms, whether your impairment(s) meets or equals the requirements for any impairment listed in Appendix 1 to subpart P of part 404 of this chapter, and your residual functional capacity. These administrative findings of fact are based on the evidence in your case record but are not themselves evidence at these steps.

(2) Administrative law judges are responsible for reviewing the evidence and making findings of fact and conclusions of law. Administrative law judges are not bound by any findings made by State agency medical or psychological

consultants. However, these findings are considered at the hearing level. See § 416.912(b)(6). When administrative law judges consider these findings, they will evaluate them using the rules set forth in paragraphs (a) through (e) of this section. Also, administrative law judges may ask for and consider the opinions of medical advisors on the nature and severity of your impairment(s) and whether your impairment(s) equals the requirements of any listed impairment in appendix 1 to subpart P of part 404 of this chapter.

(3) When the Appeals Council makes a decision, it will follow the same rules for considering opinion evidence as administrative law judges follow.

[56 FR 36968, Aug. 1, 1991]

§ 416.928 Symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings.

Medical findings consist of symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings:

(a) *Symptoms* are your own description of your physical or mental impairment. If you are a child under age 18 and are unable to adequately describe your symptom(s), we will accept as a statement of this symptom(s) the description given by the person who is most familiar with you, such as a parent, other relative, or guardian. Your statements (or those of another person) alone, however, are not enough to establish that there is a physical or mental impairment.

(b) *Signs* are anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which can be observed, apart from your statements (symptoms). Signs must be shown by medically acceptable clinical diagnostic techniques. Psychiatric signs are medically demonstrable phenomena which indicate specific abnormalities of behavior, affect, thought, memory, orientation and contact with reality. They must also be shown by observable facts that can be medically described and evaluated.

(c) *Laboratory findings* are anatomical, physiological, or psychological phenomena which can be shown by the use of a medically acceptable laboratory diagnostic techniques. Some of these diagnostic techniques include chemical tests, electrophysiological studies (electrocardiogram, electroencephalogram, etc.),

roentgenological studies (X-rays), and psychological tests.

[45 FR 55621, Aug. 20, 1980, as amended at 58 FR 47586, Sept. 9, 1993]

§ 416.929 How we evaluate symptoms, including pain.

(a) *General.* In determining whether you are disabled, we consider all your symptoms, including pain, and the extent to which your symptoms can reasonably be accepted as consistent with the objective medical evidence, and other evidence. By objective medical evidence, we mean medical signs and laboratory findings as defined in § 416.928 (b) and (c). By other evidence, we mean the kinds of evidence described in §§ 416.912(b) (2) through (6) and 416.913 (b) (1), (4), and (5) and (e). These include statements or reports from you, your treating or examining physician or psychologist, and others about your medical history, diagnosis, prescribed treatment, daily activities, efforts to work, and any other evidence showing how your impairment(s) and any related symptoms affect your ability to work (or if you are a child, to function independently, appropriately, and effectively in an age-appropriate manner). We will consider all of your statements about your symptoms, such as pain, and any description you, your physician, your psychologist, or other persons may provide about how the symptoms affect your activities of daily living and your ability to work (or if you are a child, to function independently, appropriately, and effectively in an age-appropriate manner). However, statements about your pain or other symptoms will not alone establish that you are disabled; there must be medical signs and laboratory findings which show that you have a medical impairment(s) which could reasonably be expected to produce the pain or other symptoms alleged and which, when considered with all of the other evidence (including statements about the intensity and persistence of your pain or other symptoms which may reasonably be accepted as consistent with the medical signs and laboratory findings), would lead to a conclusion that you are disabled. In evaluating the intensity and persistence of your symptoms, including pain, we will

consider all of the available evidence, including your medical history, the medical signs and laboratory findings and statements about how your symptoms affect you. (Section 416.927 explains how we consider opinions of your treating source and other medical opinions on the existence and severity of your symptoms, such as pain.) We will then determine the extent to which your alleged functional limitations and restrictions due to pain or other symptoms can reasonably be accepted as consistent with the medical signs and laboratory findings and other evidence to decide how your symptoms affect your ability to work (or if you are a child, to function independently, appropriately, and effectively in an age-appropriate manner).

(b) *Need for medically determinable impairment that could reasonably be expected to produce your symptoms, such as pain.* Your symptoms, such as pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, weakness, or nervousness, will not be found to affect your ability to do basic work activities unless medical signs or laboratory findings show that a medically determinable impairment(s) is present. Medical signs and laboratory findings, established by medically acceptable clinical or laboratory diagnostic techniques, must show the existence of a medical impairment(s) which results from anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities and which could reasonably be expected to produce the pain or other symptoms alleged. At the initial or reconsideration step in the administrative review process (except in disability hearings), a State agency medical or psychological consultant (or other medical or psychological consultant designated by the Secretary) directly participates in determining whether your medically determinable impairment(s) could reasonably be expected to produce your alleged symptoms. In the disability hearing process, a medical or psychological consultant may provide an advisory assessment to assist a disability hearing officer in determining whether your impairment(s) could 'reasonably be expected to produce your alleged symptoms. At the administrative law judge hearing or Appeals Council level, the administrative law judge or the Appeals Council